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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2015

TAGS: PREL PINS MOPS PTER LE IS KPAL KPKO SY GOI EXTERNAL MILITARY RELATIONS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI DEBRIEF ON KATYUSHA ATTACK ON KIRYAT SHMONA

REF: BEIRUT 4099

Classified By: CDA Gene A. Cretz. Reason 1.4 (B/D)

1. (S) Israeli MFA and MOD sources provided Embassy with details concerning the December 27 Katyusha attack from Lebanon on northern Israel. At 2309 local time, Israeli forces reported three explosions in northern Israel, but the debris has not been located to date. MOD contacts said several rockets may have landed near Shlomi, a western Galilee town that has been hit regularly in the past. At 2329, 2342 and 2346, Israeli forces detected 107mm Katyusha rocket firings, which landed in Kiryat Shmona, an Israeli town in the far north. Two of these rockets damaged residential housing: one landed in the living room of a free-standing house; the other landed in the stairwell of an apartment block. No casualties were reported. MFA and MOD clarified that December 29 AP press reports referring to rockets "made in Russia; sold to Syria" referred to weapons used by Hizballah on November 21 rather than the December 27 attack. Outgoing Military Intelligence Chief Farkash recently briefed the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee on this subject, according to MFA Deputy Director General Roni Yaar.

2. (C) The IDF escorted two UNIFIL soldiers to the impact sites at 0630 on December 28. The Israeli MFA Director UN political affairs told Embassy poloff that the GOI blamed the GOL (for not controlling its territory), but said that Palestinian organizations may have been responsible for the rocket attack. He noted a positive change in attitude and responsiveness from UNIFIL to recent attacks, and praised the UN Secretary-General's December 28 press statement deploring the Katyusha attack. MOD civilian contacts confirmed that the Israeli air force had retaliated against a PFLP-GC base in Lebanon (Reftel).

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